

ALASCO, AND THE PLAY-LICENSER.

UNTOWARD accidents, which the most wary calculator of future events could never foresee, occasion frequently the revival of discussions which have at least the merit, and it is not a questionable one, of shewing how sternly every encroachment upon the liberty of a people should be resisted at the outset ; and, farther, that uncontrolled power, however moderately exercised for a time, will most assuredly some day or other be flagrantly abused. The illustration of these truths will be found in the recent treatment of Mr. Shee's tragedy of "Alasco," by the Lord Chamberlain and his deputy. Of Mr. Shee personally we know nothing, but his name as an artist and man of taste has long been before us. There is also a higher question involved in this affair than the fate of Mr. Shee's work, namely—whether men of talent shall ever again write for the stage, or the national theatre in future present nothing to the public but the indecencies of such pieces as "The Poachers," or writings of no higher level in literature than those of the deputy-licenser himself. The "insolence of office" was never so unwarrantably exercised as on the present occasion. The licensors of the Bourbons have been outdone in the scrupulous zeal of an over-fawning servility in this country—in England ! that so proudly and justly boasts of its generous freedom in other matters ; and that, too, at the very moment when the liberal career pursuing by the government on a variety of important questions, is strengthening its own hands, and adding a mass of popular influence to its support. The present may, therefore, be considered the act of a party as forgetful of the spirit that should prompt those holding offices obnoxious to British feeling, as it is deficient in good taste. The best precedent we can find for the conduct of Mr. George Colman the younger, is that of the censor who demurred on the publication of the passage in "Paradise Lost" which speaks of the moon's eclipse, "with fear of change perplexing monarchs." The licenser and his deputy seem themselves to have been moon-stricken, or, as the late Marquis of Londonderry would express himself, to have laboured under an "hydrophobia," at the remotest allusion in tragedy to liberty or despotism, to stars, titles, courtiers, or priests. The passages erased have no relation to any state of things existing in this country—they are admitted truisms, and parallel passages have long been current on the boards. The boys at our public schools must now cease to declaim about Brutus and Tarquin, or Brutus and Cæsar, or Cato and Rome, if this is to be law. No hireling of the Spanish Inquisition could display more of the eagerness of *ultra*-zealous subserviency in office, than has been shown in the present instance ; tending to crush noble and generous opinions which have been admitted and applauded in all civilized countries and in all ages, however little they may have been acted upon. The erasures, too, of the licenser are calculated to assimilate the English stage to the most strait-laced of those on the Continent ; and even to make it descend below many of them, in the avoidance of every topic that may keep alive the name of freedom and lofty and heroic associations. The deputy-licenser seems to have resolved—openly and impudently resolved—that his *ipse dixit* shall govern the British drama, even in generalities ; and in the wantonness of his "brief authority," and at the expense of his reputation for common sense, has dared to defy the

public opinion of his country—or the sentiments of men of all creeds and parties in this great nation.

It is not our intention here to notice Mr. Shee's play otherwise than as connected with the censor ; the merits or demerits of the poetry, or plot, or of the tragedy, either in parts or altogether, form a distinct subject, and would render this article too copious, and divide the attention that should primarily be directed to the act of "despotism" (we use the word in the teeth of the Lord Chamberlain and of Mr. George Colman the younger) which it involves. It may not be irrelevant, however, to recall to the memory of the reader the origin of the play-licensing act, so liable to abuse in its present state, and altogether so anti-British in spirit, that those who do not recollect how the scalping-knife was originally placed in the hands of the theatrical mohawk may be saved the trouble of enquiring about it. It is to the year 1737, and to the minister who formed the septennial act, which destroyed the ancient duration of parliaments, and opened a wide door for corruption, almost justifying popular interference (for the septennial act was a deed of an *arbitrary* legislature,* which king, lords, and commons had no right to perform at the expense of a great principle of the British constitution,) that the Lord Chamberlain and Mr. George Colman the younger are indebted for their power and the public for the ingenious display of intellect which has been exhibited on this occasion. That minister, instead of enlisting men of talent and principle on his side to resist literary attacks by fair weapons, invited, among others, miserable renegadoes, who had no principles at all, and who were deserters from the ranks of his opponents, a circumstance not without a parallel in later times. When he found, as must always happen, how futile and contemptible the efforts of such men were, and how little they could operate on the nation, he determined, as far as possible, to avail himself of "brute force," the *ultima ratio* of corrupt and incensed power. A manuscript farce (called the "Golden Rump") was presented to him by the manager of a theatre, as having been offered for representation, though it had not been performed, and most likely never would have been, being of a most abusive and even seditious character. The opportunity was too good to be lost. Too many shots had been fired at the minister from the stage for Sir Robert Walpole to pass it by. The embryo farce was produced in the House of Commons as the text for a copious philippic upon the calumny, malice, insolence, and sedition of the theatre where it had never appeared. An act, which had no doubt been ready prepared, was rapidly passed, vesting play-licensing in any "Noodle" or "Doodle," whom accident or interest might place in the situation of Lord Chamberlain ; of course presuming that official to be always qualified with the literary discrimination, independence of mind, and strict impartiality, which the better order of British noblemen ought to possess. To these qualifications there is unfortunately no "royal road"

* The difference between "a *supreme* and an *arbitrary* legislature," to borrow a phrase of Junius, is, that an *arbitrary* legislature might annihilate the constitution which is the common parent—a *supreme* legislature could not abrogate its great principles. An *arbitrary* legislature, acting in corrupt union, might abolish the elective principle entirely, for example, and dictate an absolute monarchy—a *supreme* legislature governs only by the great constitutional principles, an invasion of which may justify the interference of the people.

for nobles or plebeians; and a deputy, supposed to be duly qualified, has usually been appointed to take the active duty of the office. Considering its obnoxious character, it has, on the whole, been pretty fairly exercised until the Duke of Montrose and his deputy, Mr. George Colman the younger, commenced a new career in its duties. It should be observed, that, at the same time with the play-licensing, a monopoly of theatres was established by Walpole, more pernicious to the true interests of the drama than the licensing duties have *until now* been. Edifices of dimensions too large for an audience to hear and see with effect, have introduced mummeries and melodramas, and prevented a pure theatrical taste from being cherished for the higher walks of tragedy and comedy, in which alone the rational part of the public might seek amusement, while smaller theatres dare not play the pieces of Shakspeare or Sheridan. Before these alterations, effected by overbearing power, the theatre was as free as the press, and managers were punishable for offences, as libellers are now, by fair legal process. The present licenser, or rather the licenser's deputy, will no doubt be as strict in regard to moral allusions, as he has been in what he unfoundedly, and uncomplimentarily to his own government, thinks political ones affecting its character,—or what else can he mean? Thus the frail sisterhood in the lobbies will be disappointed in their expectations of finding the delicate graces, and rich *double entendre** of Mr. George Colman the younger *en scène*. They must expect no fresh excitements to their chaste loves from that quarter, but return with heavy hearts to their watchful couches, or console themselves at home with his past lucubrations.

We do not impugn the Government in the present business, for the members of it well know that there has been no disposition shewn of late by dramatic writers to indulge in offensive allusions. We should not animadvert on the licenser who erased passages that admitted of politico-satirical construction, this being the real object of his official existence, his essential vocation. But there is no trace of such in the play which has been so insolently treated. It may be doubted if even the fanatic Freyssinous, the foe of free literature and free opinion in France, would have sanctioned all the excisions of Mr. George Colman the younger, when their general nature and the situation of the characters are considered. There is a degree of proper feeling in managers and in the public, which would not tolerate coarse attacks upon an authority; and any worthy of importance, having that bias, are not likely to be often made. The present is to be looked upon as the act of the Lord Chamberlain and his deputy alone; but it certainly does become higher authorities to prevent such flagrant abuses of the licensing power from again occurring, especially as Parliament is beginning to encourage the polite arts. We expect no repeal of the present law, because, right or wrong, it confers power; and power once conferred is rarely ever to be withdrawn. Some check to the stupidity, servility, and bad passions of a licenser should be formed, or some mode of appeal established, even if it were to the ministers themselves. Mr. Canning or Lord Liverpool, on perusing the present castrated tragedy, would be the very first to smile and condemn the censor's conduct. Indeed he seems to

* *Vide* his published works.

have mystified himself in refusing the repetition of truisms that are now used on the stage in dramatic performances, or have been anxious to shew that he would not admit such where he thought he should by such showing exhibit his zeal. Can it be that the deputy and his master are determined to commence a new era as to the stage,* and contribute their modicum to stifle all lofty opinions in the drama—crush high and noble sentiments, a belief in which has in all ages constituted the very essence of public virtue—and labour, as far as their means will allow them, in debasing the character of the theatre? His Grace of Montrose (whose ancestor so sternly opposed the bringer in of the licensing act), having determined to support his deputy, must share the odium of his conduct. He volunteered chivalrously in his defence (like his ancient namesake of the north for the Stuart), but the want of power in his weapons and his deficiency of skill in their use, renders his assistance of little or no service to his Sancho Panza. In the epistle† to Mr. Shee, a lasting testimony of his Grace's refined taste and lucid style of composition, it would have been politic, though less generous, had he declined giving his own highly discreet and forcible opinion, and simply stated that he considered himself bound by his deputy. What can his Grace mean by the phrase "*at this time*," &c. the tragedy should not be acted? To what tremendous state mystery does he allude "*that may not strike authors*," but of which the Lord Chamberlain and Mr. George Colman the younger are in possession? Perhaps Mr. Shee, (who is we believe of the sister kingdom), in his literary shortsightedness, did not observe the effect his tragedy must produce, if acted in Ireland, upon the enlightened followers of Captain Rock—he

* That the monopoly in the drama is to be sustained, we may judge from the Lord Chamberlain's refusal to license French tragedy and comedy under any restrictions. When *free trade* is established, we ought to have a *free Theatre*. Every thing that will keep knowledge alive or spread it further, should be tolerated. The dramatic works of Corneille or Racine are as moral as the best of our own. The French theatres too (in spite of what some allege respecting the people) are far removed from the unblushing profligacy exhibited in ours; while our national character is more lofty and respectable—a strange anomaly, proving the effect of similar restrictions, which should extend farther, as the French do, or wholly cease. The pedlaring spirit of the manager appears through this refusal; it may be presumed it was not the Lord Chamberlain's own act. Must our literary entertainments and fine arts for ever smack of the spirit of managers and of shopkeepers!

† The Literary Gazette justly observes that "His Grace either wants time or a deputy in literary matters." Let our readers judge.

"Sir—Thinking Mr. Colman a very sufficient judge of his duty, and as I agree in his conclusion (from the account he has given me of the tragedy of *Alasco*), I do conclude that at *this time*, without considerable omissions, the tragedy should not be acted; and whilst I am persuaded that your intentions are upright, I conceive that it is precisely for *this reason* (though it may not strike authors) that it has been the wisdom of the Legislature to have an Examiner appointed, and power given to the Chamberlain of the Household to judge whether certain plays should be acted at all, or *not acted at particular times*.‡

"I do not mean to enter into an argument with you, Sir, on the subject, but think that your letter, conceived in polite terms to me, calls upon me to return an answer, showing that your tragedy has been well considered.

"I remain, Sir, with esteem,

"Your obedient Servant,

"MONTROSE."

‡ We have not read this act. Does it really confer this monstrous power? After being licensed, we had imagined any piece might be performed. Woe to our best tragedies under the *new regime*, if this be the law!

did not calculate what tithe-proctors, "what district *despots*" might fall, were Alasco performed in Dublin or Cork—how Sir Harcourt Lees might be thrown into fresh convulsions by the mention of his favourite orthodoxy, or Sir Abraham Bradley King forced to the remotest recesses of his stationary warehouse to invoke the "glorious and immortal memory," and strengthen his spirit for martyrdom, on hearing any "question the high privilege of (Orange) oppression." Mr. Shee, too, had forgotten the English radicals, who would have collected warlike stores again in the foot of an old stocking, and with fifteen ounces of gunpowder have threatened the existence of a mighty empire, notwithstanding the free trade and diminishing taxation of Messrs. Robinson and Huskisson and the conciliatory disposition of Mr. Canning. How could they resist the hope

——— To rescue from the oblivious grave,
Where tyrants have combined to bury them,
A gallant race, a nation and her fame !

Even the ghost of Thistlewood, like that of the defunct Dane king (O profane comparison, Mr. Colman!) might have crossed the Covent-garden boards, and inflamed the audience at the delivery of such a passage ! At "*this time*," too, when *Louis le Desiré* reigns in peace over France and Spain, and devours his *pieds de cochon* undisturbed by the eagle of Elba, and when this Bourbon has succeeded in virtually destroying elective rights among his people, and is become absolute again ! When Austria and Prussia, like our county gaolers, sleep tranquilly amid fetters and dungeons, secure in the tenacity of their iron ! Above all, Mr. Shee did not recollect Russia and her armed million, whom his tragedy would inevitably call from Covent-garden boards into Poland to quell the sentiment that "'Tis not rebellion to resist oppression," thereby disturbing the present wholesome state of the Holy Alliance ; or, as a lawyer would say, having a tendency to disturb it, which is exactly the same thing in law ! Profound foresight of the licenser and his deputy ! Let authors admire it in silence, and bow with all humility to their statesmanlike sagacity, as these objections were not likely "to *strike*" them ! Thus the stage will, by and by, try its best to make us all that servility can desire, or the servile heart of the licenser regard as the mirror of true fealty.

Mr. Shee has very truly stated (whatever the merits of his tragedy may be in a literary view) that it does not contain "one sentiment, moral, religious, or political, of which an honest subject of this empire can justly disapprove, or which any *honourable man of any party* should be ashamed to avow." The plot and incidents belong to another time and country. In future tragedies, however, a Brutus must not invoke his country's liberty, according to Mr. George Colman the younger. A King of Denmark, who is an assassin, must not have his dignity prophaned by another Hamlet's calling him unworthy names. A Richard the Third must not be styled a despot, for having mounted to the throne by means of private assassination or treachery and open bloodshed, doubtless to prevent offence to Alexander of Russia and Ferdinand of Spain, in the licenser's opinion. To him another tragedy of Cato would be downright sedition. Every epithet that can be directly or indirectly applied by the dramatist to designate the tyrant, or the slave that licks his feet—to lash unhallowed power, or its minions, riding

audaciously on the necks of nations, however remote the era described, is forbidden under pretence that at this time it is improper, “though it may not strike authors.” The priests too seem unlawful game in the sight of Mr. George Colman the younger, at least in tragedy : whether in his wisdom the rubicund friar may retain a place in comedy is a question still ; but as “gentle dullness ever loves a joke,” there is yet a chance for the brotherhood in that department. Mr. Shee has quoted “Venice Preserved” and other pieces at present on the stage, that contain stronger passages than his own play. He might have quoted a hundred such, licensed by preceding censors without a scruple, but *they* were no doubt unfit for their duty. The present licenser stands the Abdiel of crawling sycophancy, faithful to an unrequired abjectness of purpose, and an unnecessary officiousness in his calling beyond example. He will not suffer the breath of Heaven to visit too roughly the Dagon of tyranny which he sets up and adores in his own imagination. He draws a circle of protection around his idol and the crimes of its worshipers, with the sanguine ink of his official pen, and dares the dramatist to trench on the charmed limit. But let us take a review of Mr. Shee’s delinquencies—those passages which are to work “treasons, stratagems, and spoils” in the licenser’s view of them, bearing in mind that the characters and events are imaginary, and the scene in a remote country. The first red ink obliteration blots out the following mischievous passage :—

What little skill the patriot sword requires,
Our zeal may boast, in midnight vigils school’d ;
Those deeper tactics, well contrived to work
The mere machine of mercenary war,
We shall not need, whose hearts are in the fray,—
Who for ourselves, our homes, our country fight,
And feel in every blow, we strike for freedom.

This would, no doubt, have caused a second Cato-street conspiracy !

Tyrants, proud lord, are never safe, nor should be ;
The ground is mined beneath them as they tread,
Haunted by plots, cabals, conspiracies ;
Their lives are long convulsions, and they shake
Surrounded by their guards and garrisons.

The tendency of this is to involve us in a war with more than one of our holy allies is clear and palpable !

Those chains his nobler countrymen have broken
On their oppressors’ heads,

was doubtless designed for Prince Mavrocordato and the Greeks, and might embroil us with Turkey ! It is, too, most wickedly put into the mouth of a character supposed to be English-born. The next and fourth erasure is doubtless intended for the same rebellious people, who presumptuously dare to “question the high privilege of oppression” on the part of the “legitimate” commander of the faithful. The mysteries still concealed in the bosoms of his Grace of Montrose and his deputy, are the causes that will justify to the letter the other excisions, no doubt ! We can only observe respecting them, that, perhaps the eighth and thirteenth were struck out from an apprehension of their effect on our slaves in the West Indies ; and the tenth for fear of offending persons a little nearer home.

5.

- If there were some sland'rous tool of state—
• Some taunting, dull unmanner'd deputy—
Some district despot prompt to play the Tarquin,
And make his power the pander to his lust.

6.

But shall I reverence pride, and lust, and rapine ?
No. When oppression stains the robe of state,
And power's a whip of scorpions in the hands
Of heartless knaves, to lash the o'erburthen'd back
Of honest industry, the loyal blood
Will turn to bitterest gall, and th' o'ercharged heart
Explode in execration.

7.

With all a soldier's prejudice to priests.

8.

But must we shake his chains,
And make them rattle in his recreant ears,
The slave is roused in vain.

9.

Now,
Our private injuries yield to public wrong,
The avenging sword ; we strike but for our country

10.

To brook dishonour from a knave in place.

11.

No, no, whate'er the colour of his creed,
The man of honour's orthodox.

What a flagrant attack on our holy religion !

12.

Our country's wrongs unite us.

13.

Will ripen to resistance—long oppression
Will prompt the dullest actor in his part.

14.

When Roman crimes prevail, methinks 'twere well,
Should Roman virtue still be found to punish them.
May every Tarquin meet a Brutus still,
And every tyrant feel one !

15.

Before what bar
Shall hapless wretches cite the power that grinds
And crushes them to earth ? O ! no, no, no !
When tyrants trample on all rights and duties,
And law becomes the accomplice of oppression,
There is but one appeal.—

16.

What ! is't because I live and breathe at large—
Can eat, drink, sleep, and move unmanacled,
That I should calmly view my country's wrongs :
For what are we styled noble, and endowed
With pomp and privilege ?

17.

For what, thus raised above our fellow-creatures,
And fed like gods on incense, but to shew
Superior worth—pre-eminence of virtue !

To guard with holy zeal the people's rights,
And stand firm bulwarks 'gainst the tide of power.
When rushing to o'erwhelm them.

18.

'Tis not rebellion to resist oppression ;
'Tis virtue to avenge our country's wrongs,
And self-defence to strike at an usurper.

Horrible political blasphemy, Mr. George Colman the younger !

19.

Had fear, or feeling sway'd against redress
Of public wrong, man never had been free ;
The thrones of tyrants had been fix'd as fate,
And slavery seal'd the universal doom.

20.

Each patriot hand may grasp a goodly sword,
And try its temper on our country's tyrants.

The erasures amount to twenty-nine in all, but the foregoing are a fair, full, and ample specimen of the most *atrocious* of them.

Such are the sentiments to be withheld from the stage, according to the new licenser of plays ! Such are the heinous doctrines which an author in a free country has dared to repeat, after the example of his predecessors in an enlightened age—at “this time” too, when there are such mysterious reasons for their suppression. We advise Mr. George Colman the younger,—if he be inclined to continue his opposition to common sense, to outrage again popular opinion, to try his strength a second time against the knowledge and information of the country, to labour once more, as far as his means will allow, to obscure and even blot out entirely those sentiments that excite the noblest and most chivalrous feelings,—to pause ere he proceed. Let him reflect, that what he imagines a reform is a vile abuse of power ; that his *kou-tou* prostration before the graven image of despotism, so dazzling his frail faculties, may fit him very accommodatingly in his character of courtier, because the world cares nothing whether Mr. George Colman the younger knock his forehead against the palace-floor of its “celestial empire” nine or nine thousand times ; it may also suit the Holy Alliance, by whose maxims it has been squared, but it will not do in Great Britain, on the part of one who ought to be an impartial arbitrator in his station in what belongs to our most valued and instructive amusements. If he persist in his ill-judged career, he will richly merit disgrace, and, we will venture to affirm, will be burthened with no small portion of it. In that case, every dramatic author who feels a proper pride, who is worthy our high literature, uniting principle and talent, will scorn to write for a stage so degraded as that of England will be, and its decline must inevitably follow. For our own parts we should little think we had fulfilled our duty to our fellow-subjects and to the interests of the drama—we should feel a great deficiency of gratitude for the support we receive, did we not animadvert thus severely, but justly, upon the most extraordinary and unnecessary exertion of Anti-British officiousness in a licenser which has ever happened. Thank God, the press is free ; and when such ill-judged and unprovoked outrages are committed without shadow of an excuse, it will unite all who wield the pen of every political party (as it has done in the present instance) in the loudest repro-

bation of the act. It will do more ; it will, we will not say, shame the spirit that can so insult public feeling,—that may not be possible,—but it will brand it with lasting obloquy. Let the licenser beard the united opinion of the country if he choose, by persisting in his present course—let him go on into “second childhood’s night” and drag the stage after him into obscurity ; his conduct shall not sleep with him in forgetfulness, but, like that of the Ephesian incendiary, be “damned to everlasting fame,” for the singularity and flagitiousness of his offences.

Y. I.

ENGLISH PLAYERS IN PARIS.

Pol. The actors are come hither, my Lord.

Ham. Buz ! Buz !

Pol. Upon my honour.

HAMLET.

It was a comfortable and refreshing thing to a lover of the drama, to hear it whispered that the English players had arrived in Paris. After the purgatory of the Français and the Odeon—after seasons of unnatural recitation and passion-tattering bombast, artificial action, and ear-splitting rhodomontade, which Talma and Duchesnois alone can make endurable—after seeing Shakspeare masquerading in the parodies of Ducis, and Otway pilloried and pilfered in the clumsy imitation of La Fosse d'Aubigny—it was like a gushing spring in the desert to mark the announcement of Othello in his own original form, to be represented at the Porte St. Martin by real flesh-and-blood Englishmen and Englishwomen. I fastened my eyes upon the play-bill, and stuck myself almost as close to it as it was to the wall, while I read it over and over again.

High as I had felt my confidence, which a moment before was plumed by the very wings of Shakspeare's fame, and seemed soaring far above each poor impediment, a cold shivering seized upon me at the sight of the names in the bill. "Othello by Mr. Barton!—who the deuce is Mr. Barton?" cried I, suddenly slapping my forehead, as if to rouse my reminiscences. "*Monsieur, me parle-t-il ?*" asked a "periwig-pated fellow" beside me, who was gaping at the play-bill, and who thought I had addressed him. "It can't be Bernard Barton, the quaker poet!" continued I, unmindful of my neighbour, and seizing my chin as if memory had changed its throne and lodged itself in that "beaked promontory." "*Poëte !*" echoed the man ; "*Sacre bleu ! Je crois bien que vous en êtes un.*" "No, no ; impossible !" exclaimed I, following the chain of my abstraction. "*Si, si ! J'en suis sûr,*" cried my tormentor ; "*au moins, si vous n'êtes pas Poëte, vous êtes Fou. C'est la même chose, n'est ce pas ?*" "*Fou !*" called I indignantly, and I was very near changing the word to a dissyllable, when, looking round me, I saw a malicious grin on the faces by which I was environed. There seemed a disposition to insult, and two or three "Goddems" were muttered close to me. I pretended unconcern, but was not *unmoved* by these symptoms ; for, after a moment's pause, and a parting glance at the play-bill, I walked out of the group, and turned down a bye street from the Boulevard. As I got round the corner I heard *Poëte, Anglais, and Goddem*, murmured, half at me and half to each other, by the knot I left, and I was not sorry to effect my retreat so quietly.

This little interruption to the flow of my feelings was soon forgotten. It was five o'clock, and the savoury smell from a *Restaurat* reminded me of a duty to perform. I accordingly walked in, and placing myself at a table, I consulted the *carte*. I was all English at this moment. I never felt so national. The spirit of Shakspeare seemed thrilling through my veins, and I proudly anticipated his approaching triumph. "*Quelle soupe Monsieur ?*" asked the waiter. "*Point de soupe, ni des grenouilles,*" replied I surlily—John Bullishly : "*donnez moi un bifeck aux pommes de terre.*" I was resolved to have as good an imitation of an English dinner as the place afforded. The beef-steak, such as it was,

being despatched, I next called for "*Rosbif*;" and the slender portion which they gave me of that being quickly disposed of, I ran my eye over the *carte* for some other English dish. But I saw nothing else, except ragouts and fricassees, and soufflés and omelettes, and the like; and I therefore wound up my repast with a bottle of porter *de Londres*, and a slice of *fromage de Chichester* (the French for Cheshire cheese,) and I felt myself fittingly prepared for a front row in the pit, to witness the representation of Shakspeare's master-piece.

Away I went, then, towards the Porte St. Martin, and whenever I reflected on the appalling names of Messrs. Barton, Fenton, and the rest, I consoled myself with the recollection, that when I first saw Kean he was playing in a country-town at a guinea a week, not a bit more considered than the rest of his company—

"Peel'd, patch'd, and pie-bald, linsey-woolsey brothers,
Grave mummers, sleeveless some and shirtless others."

Who knows, thought I, but these unheard-of heroes may be yet destined to fill the broad end of Fame's trump; to revive the glories of Garrick, and throw Kemble and Young in the shade? I encouraged the feeling: I remembered that

—————"The milky way
Is framed of many nameless stars,"—

and I hoped that I was going to gaze on a theatrical constellation, which had only hitherto escaped the observation of the astronomers.

As I advanced along the Boulevard towards the Porte St. Martin, the number of persons coming in the opposite direction surprised me not a little; for I did not calculate on any great attention being excited towards the English play. Approaching the theatre, the crowd was immense. A double line of carriages stretched far down the Boulevard; hundreds of pedestrians blocked up every avenue; and a strong force of *gendarmerie*, horse and foot, occupied the position. Not being a resident of Paris, and only having come to town that evening, I could not divine the meaning of all this "dreadful note of preparation;" so I set myself to inquire from some of the by-standers what it was all about. I soon learned that for two or three preceding days a notion had run that the national pride was concerned, and the national glory compromised by the appearance of the English players. It was thought that they were particularly patronized by the Court; and that was of itself enough to make them unpopular. An infamous report had been spread that the French actors in London had been treated with indignity, and even with violence. A certain set of writers had fostered this calumny in the journals; and a desperate cabal had been formed among the students of law, physic, *etcetera*, (which comprehensive word, be it known, is not here meant to include divinity nor the other arts,) to oppose, put down, and annihilate this attempted performance of English plays, designated by one of the Journals a "*malheureuse innovation*." Dark threats of vengeance against the English generally were muttered all through Paris. Precautions were consequently taken. The armed force at the Theatre was trebled; the Commissary of Police in that quarter was replaced by a magistrate of well-known vigour; and measures were resolved on for staring the danger in the face.

My anxiety to get in was redoubled at this information. I had known the French well, as I thought, for several years, and I offered to stake my head that nothing ungenerous, inhospitable, or unmanly, would be seen that night in the theatre. Luckily for me, none of the by-standers took me at my word, or I might have been at this moment

“ A headless carcase and a nameless thing ;”

my spirit wandering in the Shades, like the fellow encountered there by Dante with his *tête* under his arm, lighting him along in place of a lantern. But I must not anticipate. To gain entrance was impossible : hundreds were turned away, after manifold efforts of persuasion and force ; carriages, filled with fashionably dressed females, retrograded from their stations ; powdered old beaux and perfumed young dandies, whiskered Liberals and curled Aristocrats—all were driven back unsatisfied. The house was chuck full.

A thought struck me. I espied a mud-bespattered tatterdemalion, whose vocation I instantly discovered in his phiz, for there was a deep-knit frown upon his brow and a comic twist about his mouth, that spoke the varying shades from tragedy to comedy so natural in a scene-shifter's boy. “ Him I approached,” as Milton says ; and I very soon made him understand my desire of being guided to the private door which served as the actors' entrance. Straightway darting through the crowd, he led me by a narrow entrance, and sundry devious passages, down steps of stairs, up others, through subterranean twinings, where hung an occasional solitary lamp, which, were not the quotation *rather* hackneyed, I should say, but served to “ make darkness visible.” At last we emerged into a narrow street at the back of the theatre, and my conductor brought me full plump against the door in whose hospitable reception all my hopes of admission were centered. A very surly Cerbera (if I may be allowed the term) received me : she had been worried to distraction by scores of applications such as she anticipated from me, and “ *Monsieur c'est impossible,*” was her growling commencement of the negotiation which I should have begun. Being a man of few words, I simply held up a five franc piece. Her honour was touched ; she looked daggers at me, and was on the point of slamming the door in my face, when I begged of her to procure me admission to the English manager. “ *Quoi ? à Monsieur Penley ?—Sacre ! Peste ! Quelle idée—et lui sur la scene ? Voir Monsieur Penley Diable !!!*” “ Mr. Penley !” echoed I ; “ is that the manager's name ? And his daughters—are they here ?” “ *Lisez l'affiche,*” grumbled she. I turned round and saw a play-bill, which I began incontinent to peruse ; and there, to my great delight, I read (skipping hastily over the firm of Barton, Fenton, and Co.)

Desdemona, by Miss Rosina Penley.

Emilia, by Miss Penley.

This is good luck, indeed, thought I ; and indeed it was so. I took out a card, and looking round me for a trusty messenger, a little fellow with knowing glance, frizzled pate, a comb behind his ear, and a wig under his arm, caught my attention. I had experience enough of stage trick to know the importance of the hair-dresser, and to divine that this was the powdered personage who filled that station at the Theatre de la Porte St. Martin. “ *C'est bon,*” thought I, and it *was* good. He

took my card and my message ; sprang from me, darted up the narrow, spiral, precipitous ascent yclept the actor's stairs, and was out of sight in the twinkling of an eye. It would be vain to tell the rush of recollection which I experienced while he was away :—the number of adventures that I ran over in my memory, in about six minutes, of all that had occurred in a space of as many years :—the numerous friends I brought to mind : their scattered destinies and various fortunes. What a rapid casting up of my long account with Time !

I was roused from my reverie by the rustling of silk. A light step came rapidly patting down the stairs. The little door at the bottom flew open ; and Desdemona and Emilia both appeared, to answer the summons of their old acquaintance, and bear him aloft between them, maugre the growling, grumbling, and grinning of the she-fury at the door. I was soon on *the boards*, in the midst of a crowd of persons belonging to the theatre, mixed with a plentiful sprinkling of *gens-d'armes*, and a few strangers like myself. The noise in front was prodigious. I peeped through a hole in the curtain and saw by far the most crowded house I had ever beheld. The cries of disapprobation and the gestures of the shouters seemed all directed against one of the side-boxes ; and the name of Martainville was vociferated, with a running accompaniment of abuse and execration that beggars description. This individual so obnoxious to public disapproval is, I was told, the editor of a journal which advocated strongly the cause of the English players, and was, on that account, mixed with political motives, in any thing but odour with the audience. “ This augurs ill,” thought I, “ for Shakspeare and Othello. But never mind. I stake my head, I do, on French urbanity !”

Three tremendous thumps, inflicted on the stage by a man with a weapon resembling a paver's mallet, was the signal for the raising of the curtain. Every one around me fled from the stage, and I, carried with the current, was deposited snugly in a most comfortable corner in the side scenes, close to the stage. As the play began, my heart throbbed high. The credit of England and of Shakspeare seemed at stake. But how much more the character of France ! On this night's conduct hung all the national claim to pre-eminence in civilization, in courtesy, and candour. The audience soon severed the slender thread by which these pretensions were suspended. The moment the play began, the uproar of the spectators commenced. Interruption, insult, and outrage were volleyed forth. Not a word could be distinguished on the stage ; and in the body of the house it was “ confusion worse confounded.” Desdemona at length appeared. “ Now, now,” cried I, “ the interruption is at an end. Now for French gallantry ; now for the victory of real politeness over momentary excitement and national prejudice !” And there was an instant's calm ; but not the calm of gentle blood or honest shame. The fact was, that the appearance of Rosina Penley, so interesting, so lady-looking, so composed, and yet so resolute withal, struck the observers with astonishment, and produced a brief propriety. “ The rabblement hooted, clapped their chopt hands, and uttered a deal of stinking breath ;”—but Coriolanus himself never gave a look of more quiet unconcern upon his ruffian constituents than did the heroine of to-night upon hers. They hearkened ; but it was only a momentary gleam of decency. The sweet

tones of the actress's voice were soon drowned in the torrent of brutal interruption; and during the first act every species of base and black-guard indignity was heaped upon the performers,—male and female alike. The second act was a renewal of the pantomime, for not a word could be distinguished. The drinking-scene, when the wine is produced and Cassio fuddled, was received with shouts of laughter. A drunken man in a tragedy! Shades of Racine and Corneille! I confess I made allowance for the violence which this exhibition must have produced on the feelings of a French audience, ignorant of the language and foreign to the manners in which it originated and is explained. But in the midst of all the uproarious turbulence which this drunken bout produced, when Othello entered, and the shocked Cassio shrunk from his rebuke, the effect of this splendid contrast, even in dumb show, was irresistible. The house seemed electrified; and the triumph of Nature and of Shakspeare would have been complete, had Kean been on the stage to finish the formation of the triumvirate. But Othello soon brought the audience to *themselves*. Unluckily “he wants the nat’ral touch; and elate at what he thought *his* victory, he outroared

— “The roar
Of loud Euroclydon.”

His ranting set all the catcalls and whistles, and groans and hisses, into renewed activity, and it was in vain to think of reducing the rioters to the peace-establishment. They hooted.

“Therewith he ’gan full terribly once more,
And chafed at that indignity right sore.”

They laughed: and here Milton furnishes a quotation as well as Spenser—

“At this he inly raged, and as they laugh’d (talk’d)
Smote him into the midriff.”

Seeing the course that matters were likely to take, I turned my attention towards the players, being a little anxious that they should keep a good countenance. They presented the appearance of a somewhat different group, described by Stillingfleet, “some with piteous moans, others grinning and only showing their teeth, others ranting and hectoring, others scolding and reviling;” and some were brooking it with great complacency, in consideration of the overflowing house, that “salve for any sore that may betide.” I recommended them to follow the example of Antonio, in the Merchant of Venice, “patiently to bear their wrath.” They liked the quotation, and the play went on. But the opening of the third act gave birth to a new scene. The usual obstructions were repeated, when some half-dozen English in the pit, aided by a few French, who were ashamed of themselves for their countrymen’s sakes, manifested some slight opposition. O for the pencil of Hogarth, or the pen of Grimm, (or even of Grimm’s Ghost,) to sketch the display of national character which followed! In an instant the ruffian rioters took to flight. Hundreds poured over the orchestra like a torrent. This spot, which should have been sacred to harmony, and a sanctuary against outrage, for it was filled with well-dressed females, was violated in the most outrageous manner. The ladies were trampled to the ground as the fugitives scrambled up to the stage. The screams of women, the crash of benches, music-

stands, and foot-lights, which last were crumbled to powder, was appalling. But if so, the appearance of the paltry, pitiful runaways was ludicrous in the extreme, and to me how gratifying! I stood in the middle of the stage, with "the gentle Desdemona" leaning on my arm. I begged of her to stand her ground for the credit of our country, and to shew a lesson to the cowardly rout around us; and she did so with admirable composure. As the recreant groups rushed round us, hid themselves in the side-scenes, or fled in every direction—I remembered a description from one of Ben Jonson's plays; how applicable!

"I do not see a face

Worthy a man, that dares look up and stand
One thunder out; but downward all like beasts
Running away at every flash."

What then, cried I, is this my knowledge of national character?

"Are these the youths that thunder at a playhouse
And fight for bitten apples?"

How would an English pit have stood a row like this! How would every heart have beat, every hand been clenched, and every foot firm-rooted for the fight! But I need not press the contrast, nor the moral of this disgraceful and disgusting scene. The *gensdarmes* poured in upon the stage in force, the curtain was dropped, and all government and order was abandoned. The French manager, however, made his appearance, and requested Othello to cut short the play, and recommence with the fifth act! The Moor unfortunately did not speak French, and the manager did not know a word of Arabic or English. So I offered my services as interpreter, and pleaded strongly against the barbarism of cutting out nearly two acts of the play. I urged the most powerful arguments: the memory of Aristotle—the credit of Shakspeare—the reputation of Desdemona—and the verses of Horace,—

"Ne ve minor, neu sit quinto productior actu
Fabula quæ posci vult, et spectata reponi."

But all was vain. He said the audience would tear down the house if the tragedy were not cut short. I assured him they were not of that kidney. "And then the *unities*, Monsieur!" cried I. "And then the *scenery*, Monsieur!" replied he. The retort was unanswerable, so I gave up the point—and I wish the French critics would yield it with half my facility. I shall here, too, give up my description. In fact, I saw little more. Desdemona was put into bed, and smothered amidst roars of laughter. Emilia spouted her reproaches like Sappho singing to the raging winds. Othello stabbed himself to prove that suicide was a most mirth-moving catastrophe—and the curtain finally fell down upon a scene of national disgrace, unparalleled, I hope, in the history of the stage.

Some contrition having been expressed in the Newspapers next morning, The School for Scandal was announced for representation on the following evening, Friday the 2d of August. This might have been prefaced by an address to the public from The Taming of the Shrew—"Your honour's players, hearing your *amendment*, are come to play a pleasant comedy." But the symptoms of amendment were deceitful. The outrage of the former night was renewed, and after the first act the representation was abandoned, and a French farce substituted for the English comedy—which seems thus prohibited from being exhibited in Paris.

E.

FRENCH AND ENGLISH TRAGEDY.—NO. III.

THERE is an interval of about thirty years between Garnier and Hardy, and this period was by no means unprolific of dramatists. But it would be waste of time to notice productions now wholly disregarded or unknown, and remarkable only for their rapidly increasing divergence from the classic path into a style and manner since known by the opposition title of THE ROMANTIC.

The precise period of Hardy's appearance is not determined,—it was some time between 1590 and 1600. He soon outstripped all competition and was regarded as a prodigy. It was most natural—for he produced eight hundred pieces, and wrote a play in three days! Of this formidable array, but forty have been rescued from destruction—and not one from oblivion. Those that remain, are, for the most part, tragi-comedies—a deformed mass of horror and licentiousness. His tragic style is mean, and his thoughts meagre, scarcely ever reaching the eloquence of tragedy. His principal work, is the Greek romance of *Theagenes and Chariclea*, dramatised into eight consecutive plays or parts, which, like the Spaniards, he denominated “Days.” With a curious *naïveté* he entitles the indecent perils and coarse trials to which he subjects the faith and chastity of his heroine, “*Les chastes et loyales amours de Theagene et de Chariclee*,” after the original romance. He has left a tragedy, entitled, “*Scedase, ou l’hospitalité violée*,” which exceeds in horror the disgusting atrocities of *Titus Andronicus*. The story is in Plutarch's life of Pelopidas. Two young Spartans, whilst enjoying hospitality in the house of an inhabitant of Leuctra, fired with a brutal passion, violate and murder the two virgin daughters of their host. The outrage commences on the stage, and is completed behind the scenes, whence the cries of the women continue to be heard by the audience. In a subsequent scene the wretched victims appear on the stage, uttering against the two ruffians furious curses and menaces, and the gallants, to escape present annoyance and future vengeance, cut the throats of the two paramours, and throw the bodies into a pit, before the eyes of the audience! There is a

tragic comedy by him, entitled *Cornelia*, and founded on the same novel of Cervantes, which furnished the subject of Fletcher's well-known comedy of *the Chances*, recently brought out as an opera at Covent Garden. The plot in both plays is nearly the same; and though Fletcher's be passably licentious, Hardy is as far beyond him in obscenity as he is beneath him in talent. The heroine is seen in bed, holding dialogue with the two cavaliers, and a courtesan is discovered in *flagrante delicto* with a page. The language is in perfect unison with the situations. It would be uninteresting, indeed revolting, to notice these wretched productions in detail. Many of them, founded on Spanish and Italian novels, are the same in plot as some plays of Shakspeare and Fletcher, with a further and surcharged resemblance in the conduct, wherever the scenes of the two English poets are most vicious in poetical and moral taste.

The fecundity of Hardy (says Fontenelle), his plays once looked into, ceases to be a wonder. It is easily accounted for by his manner of choosing and treating his subjects. His process was simply this:—He laid violent hands upon a life of Plutarch, a chronicle, or a romance, and mangled and tortured it into a drama. To the style of his verses, or structure of his scenes, he gave no thought. Consistency of character, and decorum or propriety of manners, were outraged by him. His princes and heroes commune familiarly with buffoons and clowns; the former debasing themselves to the language and manners of the latter. The probabilities, or rather possibilities, of time and place he spurned, with a magnanimous contempt of Aristotle's "Poe-tick." A personage of his becomes older by forty years during the representation of the play, and a man's beard whitens with age in the interval between two acts. The death of Achilles in the Temple of Apollo, or of a malefactor on the scaffold or the wheel, were to him alike tragedy. The grossest obscenities passed upon the stage. A courtesan in bed converses with her lover in such language as to support her character to the utmost limits of reality. A woman suffers the last outrage of the brutality of the passions almost before the audience. His favourite damsels, in their presence, under the very eye of a parent, are by the privileged loquacity of a nurse, or a clown, made the subjects of nauseous pleasantries fit only for the stews. His chaste and gentle, but suspected wives are reviled, bestrumpeted, and beaten on the stage, and the jealous husband, in the savageness of mere animal passion, descants upon the circumstances which feed his jealousy, in language destitute of the slightest covering of human shame.

Such is, in substance, the character of Hardy, as given by Fontenelle, and some other French writers of inferior note. It is impossible not to feel that some portion of these strictures might bear obliquely upon the English dramatists of the same period. The vices of both were analogous, because they sprang from the same cause—the rudeness of the age in which they lived. This is a delicate topic, and requires some explanation.

The age of Elizabeth is looked upon by many, and perhaps not without reason, as the Augustan age of English literature. How

then can it be called rude? In this, as in so many other subjects of controversy, all depends upon rightly distinguishing. It is true there was in that age a splendid, perhaps unrivalled, aristocracy of talent and learning; but the productions of this aristocracy in philosophy and poetry circulated only within its own limits. The great mass of the people, in their rude ignorance, knew nothing of the firmament of literature above their heads, and of course imparted to it no touch of their own barbarism. Accordingly, the writers of that period, who wrote only to be read, have the nobleness of genius, with no trait of an early age but its simplicity. But suppose the same persons writing for the stage, that is, for an untaught populace beneath them,—they must have accommodated and debased themselves to the coarseness of its appetite, and the clumsiness of its perceptions;—they must have allied the native nobleness of their genius, no longer with the simplicity of an early age, but with the ignorance and extravagance, the moral and intellectual impurity of taste, of an uncivilized people.

Is not this strikingly seen in our early dramatists; and, above all, in Shakspeare—he who, in his unbounded and irregular flight, rose higher and descended lower than any other? His predecessors, contemporaries, and immediate successors, were comparatively improved in taste, and inspired with ambition, by an academical education, and an acquaintance with the ancients. But Shakspeare was unambitious, even to an apparent unconsciousness of his own power. His fatal carelessness, not only of correcting, but of preserving his plays, and his abandonment of dramatic writing whilst his intellect had scarcely past its maturity, are strong grounds for presuming that he laboured only for immediate lucre and independence. Ignorant of the divinity within him, and in so many of his compositions, with all their vices and weaknesses,—unacquainted with the great poetic intelligences of other times, the measuring himself with whom might have awakened in him a higher ambition and better taste,—he was actuated only by the ignoble sentiment of worldly prudence (a quality eminently his), and, having made his fortune, he passed the last years of his life in affluent and idle retirement. Were his spirit to revisit this mortal scene, perhaps his greatest surprise would be the discovery of his own glory.—Perhaps also he would disavow with shame that class of admirers, which confounds with his genius those turpitudes of taste in which he sacrificed his better judgment to a rude and rabble audience,—which affects to find matter for delight in him, where all others find matter for disgust, with a strangeness of propensity, not unlike that of the lover in the Roman poet, who was fascinated by the polypus in his mistress's nose.

The passage is illustrative, and may as well be quoted :

“ Turpia decipiunt cæcum vitia, aut etiam ipsa hæc
Delectant; veluti Balbinum polypus Hagnæ.

HOR.

To carry the supposition a little farther, his spirit hovering over the pit of either of our great theatres would be strangely moved, on beholding many a stout amateur of the “Shaksperian” lustily ap-

plauding "our unrivalled bard" in the mediocrity of Thomson and the trash of Cibber and Tate. The truth is, that some of the countrymen of Shakspeare, in the eagerness of their enthusiasm to do him justice against the depreciation of foreigners, not only adore what is divine, but have deified what is beastly, and with Egyptian blindness, worship him in the very grossness and garbage of his stall.

The other great dramatists of the Shaksperian age and school, come within the range of these observations. Like him they bowed themselves to their time. Had heaven reserved the apparition of these mighty spirits to the age of Anne, we then might boast not only our pre-eminence of dramatic genius, but also of superior models in the art. It would seem as if capricious nature had observed amongst us an inverted order of production in the birth of dramatic poets. In Greece Thespis was followed by Æschylus, who in his turn made way for Sophocles and Euripides. In France Hardy was succeeded by Corneille, Racine, Voltaire,—the successors in each case, joining superiority of talent with the advantages of an age advanced in all the arts and elegancies of civilized life. Had Sophocles and Euripides been contemporary with Thespis, or even with Æschylus, the world had wanted the *Œdipus* and *Phædra*. So it unfortunately has fallen out in England. Our Æschyluses, Sophocleses, and Euripideses, were born at the same inauspicious period; and they have transmitted to us the monuments of their talents, tarnished and deformed with the barbarism of the time. Ben Jonson alone seems to have been devoted to the classic models. He corrected the wild extravagance of fable which then prevailed; and if he was still carried away by the ruling taste for tragi-comedy, or tragedy with rabble scenes, he has not fallen into ridiculous anachronisms and absurdities, by representing the clowns and mechanics of his native country, uttering homebred jests, and domestic familiarities of phrase under foreign names and exotic characters. But Jonson's genius inclined too decisively to comedy; and though the taste, judgment, and talent of a scholar and a poet are manifest in his *Catiline* and *Sejanus*, they are still deficient in dramatic power. Too sedulous of imitating the splendid prose of the Roman orators and historians, he looked chiefly to versifying them with correctness and force, but did not infuse into his imitations the soul and passion of tragedy.

The perfection of tragedy, as Voltaire directly, and Dryden indirectly, observe, "is the *chef d'œuvre* of society," and could not have had existence in the age of Jonson and Shakspeare. A perfect tragedy, discovering the genius of the poet and the perfection of the art, can be produced only in a highly-refined state of manners. This is not peculiar to the drama, but applies generally to poetic literature. The character, spirit, and supremacy, of the classic models may be reached in a nation's youth by some happy intelligence, transcendentally endowed beyond the present and future time, but are felt and appreciated only in a cultivated age. Milton, the only one, modern or even ancient, (Virgil scarcely excepted)

who took up the classic trumpet, and blew into it a blast worthy of Homer, was unknown until the age of Anne. In fact, the multitude of a semi-civilized generation, and the populace of imbecile minds in a more advanced and refined one, are the devoted and proper amateurs of what is called the romantic. It does not come within the present purpose to illustrate the latter part of this position by reference to some living reputations; the success of Hardy is a sufficient illustration.

It would seem extraordinary on the first view, that Hardy's mediocre trash should supersede even such pieces as those from which some extracts have been given in previous Numbers. But nothing is more easily accounted for. When the earlier pieces were produced, no public stage existed; they were represented in colleges and in the mansions of the great, and the actors and auditors were persons of rank or education, competent to judge of good writing. But in the time of Hardy, and chiefly by his means, the stage became a popular entertainment—the multitude became the arbiters of the theatre—and Hardy was, naturally enough, exalted and followed. His reputation even survived him, cherished by the popular taste; and not only kept possession of the stage, in spite of *Theophile*, *Mairet*, and *du Ryer*, but contested it for a moment with the infant genius of Corneille. It is amusing and curious to compare the language used by the partisans of Hardy at that day, with that of the modern admirers of Germanism. "Hardy (said they) drew from Nature and his own genius. He knew the dramatic rules, but he was above them, and despised them." His extravagances of incident and adventure, his grovelling and fantastic use of monstrosities and superstitions, were called the creations of a boundless fancy. If his princes and heroes descended to the sentiments and language of mechanics and clowns, it was said, the great master of the human heart had taken care that his princes and heroes should be *men*. His impurity and coarseness of manners and phrase, were called "honest nature," and his vices generally, when too bad for palliation, were treated as peccadilloes.

Such was the condition of the French drama on the appearance of the great Corneille, who united in himself, to a degree rarely shown in the history of mind, the capacities of genius and judgment, to create, exalt, establish, and adorn the tragic art. He was one of those rare spirits that appear singly in an age, to determine the poetic glory of a nation. It is a strong proof of the tyranny of false taste, that even Corneille himself, in his first pieces, was carried away by the prevailing character of the time; and if he had been born some forty years earlier, or if Hardy possessed a tenth part of Shakspeare's genius, it is probable Corneille would not have tried, or would have failed in the attempt, to depose the romantic drama, and enthrone classic tragedy in France.

There are few events more flattering to the pride—more illustrative of the supremacy of mere intellect, than the rise of Corneille. His genius had to burst through a twofold bondage; first, the vicious authority of the preceding age, and the bad taste of his own; next:

the yoke imposed on him by the Cardinal Richelieu. That despotic, tasteless priest was the same rapacious exclusionist of literary fame to which his claims were ridiculous, as of political power, which was his proper element. He had yoked to his car four petty wits, who wrote bad plays at his dictation, of which they received the profits and he the praise—an arrangement of which so far there was no reason to complain. With these he yoked in the unequal genius of Corneille. But the poet soon recalcitrated, and broke loose from the patron-minister, retired to his native province, and there gave himself to the study of history and human nature, and to the enjoyment of freedom. He now made himself acquainted with those principles of grandeur, beauty, propriety, and consistency, which the acumen of the Greeks collected and generalized from the immortal works of Homer and Sophocles. He communed particularly with ancient Rome, through her poets, orators, and historians, until his memory and imagination became impressed and imbued with the stature, physiognomy, and soul of Roman character. He enriched his mind with the knowledge of the Spanish drama, and of the chivalrous age. And he produced that *chef-d'œuvre* of genuine romantic tragedy, in which chivalrous exaltation and "the point of honour" are blended with the severer beauties of the classic models, and a daughter's vengeance, placed in the finest dramatic conflict with a woman's love. "Richelieu," says Fontenelle, "was filled with alarm, as if the Spaniards were in possession of a suburb of Paris." But he decried and caballed in vain. France was now too enlightened;—the age of Louis XIV. was just begun. *Beau comme le Cid* became a common phrase, even in the provinces, and the poet soon had in his library a translation of his work into every language of Europe, except the Slavonic. As these remarks hasten to a close, his tragedies can scarcely be glanced at. All his *chefs-d'œuvre* have been translated into English, but so wretchedly, that, with one exception, they have fallen into utter oblivion. Cibber's *Ximene*, from the *Cid*, is not an exception. Whitehead's *Roman Father*, has a precarious hold of the theatre. It would take a volume to point out the instances of perverse incapacity with which this play is taken from the *Horace* of Corneille. Two examples will suffice. In the original the honest fury of the sister seeing in her brother only the slayer of her lover, clothed in his bloody spoils, provokes his fatal indignation. In the translation, she provokes her fate by a sentimental artifice, alike disavowed by the rude simplicity of infant Rome, true passion, and historic truth. Most readers of poetry know the curse of *Camilla*. This masterly and eloquent climax of tragic terror is broken in pieces by Whitehead, and but a poor fragment or two preserved. Corneille has, like other great poets, great blemishes. He is sometimes complicated, declamatory, and tiresome. He introduces subordinate intrigues, and personages that are not only useless but insipid; but his sins are the more pardonable, that they are really infrequent. Without instituting any comparison between him and the Shaksperian dramatists, it may be said that, like them—like "the master himself,"—

he had a vast intellect, varied invention, and great force of touch. What compass, power, and diversity of dramatic interest, character, and situation, in the *Cid*, *Horace*, *Rodogune*, *Cinna*, *Polyeucte*, *Heraclius*! With Dryden, perhaps, he may be more appropriately compared. Both were profound and learned critics of dramatic composition. Both had that precious secret which, Voltaire says, is seldom possessed by above two or three people in a century—of being truly eloquent in verse. But without in the least detracting from the homage due to the illustrious English poet, or indeed giving any opinion of his genius, which is peculiarly uncalled for at this day, it may be said that the Frenchman, as a dramatist, proceeded upon more steady principles; and although sometimes turgid and tedious, with a greater severity and purity of taste. Both wrote valuable essays upon the dramatic art, in prose—and here it is gratifying to vindicate for Dryden a decided superiority in wit and style.

But little need be said of *Racine*. He is a true poet, and the most enchanting of versifiers. It is upon his merits, however, that the French and foreigners most widely differ. The reason is obvious; his fascination chiefly lies in his style, which a foreign ear can scarcely appreciate, and no translator can approach. In sentiment, too, he is peculiarly French. The widow of Hector, speaking of her child, says,

“Je ne l’ai point encore embrassé d’aujourd’hui.”

This verse is regarded by some foreigners as a feeble common-place, and is translated as such by Phillips, in *The Distressed Mother*; but to the French it brings the sentiment and the image of *the Mother’s Morning Kiss to her Child*;—one of the most sacred and endearing of domestic tendernesses to a French woman. Phillips’s *Distressed Mother* is a most slanderous translation. The sweet notes of tender sentiment, the frequent strokes of vigour and sublimity, the poetic and elegant, yet simple colour of the style of the original, are egregiously missed by him in every scene. That exquisitely-wrought scene, in which *Hermione* upbraids the faithless *Phyrrhus* in a tone of cutting irony and insulted pride, sometimes yielding for an instant to the resistless frankness of impassioned love, becomes in the English play an unanimated lumber of mere words. Let the reader but refer to the text, and compare this single short scene, and form his judgment. *Racine’s Hermione* (to give a few instances in which the very meaning is mistaken) says,

“Je ne t’ai point aimé, cruel!—qu’ai-je donc fait?”

Phillips’s “Have I not loved you then, perfidious man?”

Racine. “Je t’aimais inconstant—qu’auras-je fait fidele.”

Phillips. “I loved you when inconstant, and even now,
Inhuman King,” &c.

Racine. “Vous ne repondez point?—perfide, je le voi
Tu comptes les momens que tu perds avec moi—
Ton cœur impatient de revoir ta Troyenne,” &c.

Phillips. “See if the barbarous prince vouchsafes an answer,
Go then to the loved Phrygian,” &c.

These few examples suffice without farther comment.

Racine invented nothing; he even narrowed the sphere, and fettered the freedom, of the drama; but he embellished to the very perfection of art.

Crebillon brought upon the stage the memorable horrors of the tragic family of Atreus, and somewhat checked the taste diffused by the fascinating effeminacy of Racine; but his traits of terror were too unsoftened to sway the public taste, and his capacity not sufficiently creative or comprehensive to emancipate and enlarge the domain of the drama.

This was reserved for Voltaire, that extraordinary and undefinable intelligence, whose impress remains upon the age in which he lived, and who has left behind so many imperishable monuments of glory and of shame. Voltaire opened to French tragedy the vast field of modern history, substituted picturesque and powerful action for narration, rejected subordinate and insipid love intrigues, and trained the senses of the French to situations of force—to terrific pictures—to the accessories of theatric illusion—to the sight of blood: in other words, he infused into the drama of his country a portion of the soul of English tragedy, which he had seized by personal observation of our stage, during his well-known visit to this country, but particularly by the study of Shakspeare. He beheld the apparition in Hamlet, and he transferred that unrivalled scene of preternatural terror to the French stage, in his "Semiramis." He there introduces the ghost of the murdered king for the purpose of preventing the horror of an unconsciously incestuous marriage, between the maritidal mother and her own and her husband's son. He saw Macbeth come out of the King's chamber—the tale of Duncan's murder told by the reeking dagger in his bloody grasp; and he copied this fearful picture where Ninias comes out of the tomb, his hands reeking with the blood of his parent. He adopted the force and pathos of our catastrophes in the deaths of 'Orosmane,' 'Tancrede,' 'Zamore.' It would be waste of time to allude to the wretched copies of his plays made by the Hills, Millers, and Murphys of the last age. The "Zaire" alone, compared with the "Zara" of Hill, furnishes numberless examples not only of original beauties, but of some which the French poet took from "Othello," overlooked or disfigured, with ludicrous stupidity, by the translator. Perhaps French tragedy, in order to be fully appreciated by foreigners, should be seen acted. Voltaire could not have seized the spirit and character of our drama, if he had not witnessed its representation. Voltaire, and particularly Racine, should be studied by an Englishman with the magic commentary of Duchesnois and Talma on the stage. He will there perceive touches of poetic art and inspiration, which escaped him in the closet. He will learn that narration may derive all the force and vividness of action from the depictive art and power with which it is written and recited: a look, a tone, a word, a position, or slight motion of the hand from Talma,—and we behold, in imagination, Œdipus with the blood of Laius dropping from his fingers. Our dread of long speeches would also be somewhat diminished. The narrative by Philoctetes of his wrongs and sufferings is one of the longest, but Talma declaims it

in a tone of Sophoclean pathos—so varies and relieves it by mute, but eloquent pauses of physical exhaustion—by changes of position, reciting one part standing—another, seated on a fragment of rock at the mouth of his cave,—that emotion goes on increasing to the close. This will readily be imagined by those who have witnessed a recent performance on our own stage. Mr. Macready, in the death-bed scene of Henry the Fourth, sustains the most powerful interest and emotion, through a whole act of almost exclusive recitation, with no relief but the poetry of Shakspeare, and the rare art of declaiming pathetically. It must be confessed, however, that the long speeches of French tragedy are, in general, severe trials of patience from the lips of any but the first-rate performers.

W.

FRENCH AND ENGLISH TRAGEDY.

“Le Theatre est ce que l’esprit humain a jamais inventé de plus noble et de plus utile, pour former les mœurs et pour les polir : c’est la le chef-d’œuvre de la société.”

VOLTAIRE.

“I believe, upon a true definition of tragedy, it will be found that its work is to reform manners, by delightful representation of human life in great persons, by way of dialogue.”

DRYDEN.

It is curious and instructive to observe the French, with less of dramatic genius than the English, surpassing the English and every other nation, in perfecting the tragic drama. There is no subject, however, the impartial treatment of which will meet with less conformity of opinion. Even the proposition just stated contains two challenges to dispute. The countrymen of Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire, smile at an assumed superiority to them, of genius to invent, taste to embellish, or talent to extend. Amongst us, on the other hand, French tragedy is absolutely contemned by three descriptions of people ;—the smitten admirers of Germanism ; those literary antiquarians, who, seeking matter for paradox and refuge for conceit, in the accessible but neglected rude essays of our ancestors, enviously decry perennial literature, because they do not know it ; lastly, some who, with judgments more enlightened, reproach the French poets with effeminacy and mannerism, and tolerate the grossness and extravagance of our own early dramatists, for the sake of that redeeming anomaly of force, grandeur, and fidelity to nature, which in them is the more striking and fascinating, from the effect of contrast and surprise. Here is a vast mass of

the reading, and even writing population of the day, prepared to trample down the principles of classic criticism ; not caring, —some perhaps not knowing,—that they proscribe Euripides and Virgil with Racine—Sophocles, Aristotle, and Horace, with Voltaire. They, however, whose minds have been formed, and whose prejudices have been removed, by classical studies, and a European education, concurring in the censure of the French poets for occasional mannerism and effeminacy, produced by a too strict observance of rules, and a too sensitive refinement of taste, will, at the same time, accord to them the honour of having given to dramatic composition, correctness of design, beauty of form, and the other graces of fine art, in a civilized age.

But why is it that English tragedy, with its superiority of genius, its force, depth, free spirit, and variety, has remained comparatively unrefined ? The following is the chief cause. The master-spirits of the drama in France produced their *chefs-d'œuvre* after the middle of the 17th and during the 18th centuries, when the French language had been already formed and polished, and French literature had reached its meridian splendour. In England, unhappily, the master-spirits, or rather the one transcendant master-spirit, appeared in an age, rich undoubtedly in the growth of great intellect, but whilst the language was yet rude, civilization less than imperfect, and the stage uncreated. Shakspeare's genius has not only immortalized his name ; but, as if to give proof of its extraordinary power, has consecrated grossness, impurity, unnatural conceits, the two extremes of baseness and bombast—in fine, all those lamentable vices of taste, which are properly not his, but of his time. It is from this leading circumstance, that tragedy in France and England bears a different impress of character, peculiar to the two nations respectively. A mere *coup-d'œil* of the progress of tragic composition in both countries will establish this fact. It may also give, perhaps, juster notions of French tragedy than are at present generally entertained amongst us. The dramatic literature of our neighbours has often mingled with our own ; but, from the incapacity of our imitators and translators, and the natural disappointment of the public, its merits have never been fairly appreciated, and, indeed, its true character never understood. The progress of dramatic improvement in France is also curiously illustrative, by contrast, of the causes which have retarded the culture, or corrupted the principles of English theatric taste. And here a material error, but too generally prevalent, may be corrected—at least stated, *en passant*. There is not, in this age of dissertation, a tyro, or a sage in criticism, who expends his judgment or his spleen on the passing literature of the stage, but opens with a lament upon the decay of

dramatic talent—a most mistaken idea, or more properly, the confusion of one idea with another. Never was our poetical literature more vivified and resplendent with the soul and genius of the drama. Boldness, variety, and force, in the invention of character and situation; a sounding and stirring of the passions to their utmost depth; a picturesque introduction of personages speaking and acting for themselves:—these are its main features. Even those great talents that have abandoned the classic for the romantic muse—but still preserve and cherish the sentiment of grandeur, beauty, and propriety, which never yet was found but in the classic models—are only the more dramatic. But in the abundance of capable genius the theatre is barren; because the depravation of public taste has consigned the stage to a race of writers whom the poverty of their resources has condemned to move in the procession, at the tail of literature. This general proposition will be understood as subject to exception and qualification, in favour of some late tragedies; but it does justly and emphatically apply to the host of translators, adapters, and revivers, who import melodrama from the fantastic bedlam stage of Germany, or the Boulevards of Paris; or rake up buried rudeness from its grave; or else fix their fangs upon any new work which may be tortured into a drama—subsisting, like freebooters, upon the outskirts of literature, by prowling among the living, and profaning the dead—ignorant alike of conscience and of taste.

Minds of superior power, with reputations to lose, or to gain, will not risk the mortification of failure for a most precarious success. But why, it will be asked, do they not take possession of the stage, and raise and reform it? There is no longer the same incentive of ambition or interest. The vast diffusion of the faculty of reading among the people, has rendered the press just as rapid a vehicle to fame and fortune, without the same perils. The stage, moreover, has fallen into neglect, if not disrepute. Those who fill the high offices of state and the ranks of nobility, no longer adorn it by their talents, or protect it by their influence. Their patronage of literary dependants is not an equalizing communion in the worship of the Muses, but rather a pampering of political satellites and parasites. The softer sex too, whose influence is always so powerful in giving the tone, and whose organic sensibility and fineness of touch are so well calculated to exalt and refine the drama, have abandoned society and the stage for heartless revelry, a pedantic smattering of science, or what is more fatal though more difficult to blame, the fascinations of a sister art. Music has nearly banished conversation from the drawing-room, and seduced the fair votaries of intellectual pleasure from the national theatres to the Italian opera.

The drama, both in France and England, first sprang up in those two extremes of society and reclusion, where the tedium of life is most importunate—palaces and cloisters. Ennui became inventive for its own relief, and produced the monstrous farces called mysteries and moralities. The French have preserved many of those gross but curious monuments of European barbarism in the middle age. They are taken almost exclusively from the mysteries of the Christian faith, and the mythology of Paganism,—sometimes blended together, not only without scruple, but with equal reverence. The fantastic and varied invention, the gorgeous splendour, the resources of architecture and machinery, displayed in these exhibitions, on occasions of sacred or profane solemnity in the courts of princes, in an age so gross and ignorant, is truly wonderful. In 1313, Philip the Fair, of France, had a morality performed before him, at which our Edward II., his Queen, a Princess of France, and a splendid train of English nobility, were present by special invitation. This extraordinary spectacle consisted of three parts: the fable of the Fox and the Lion dramatized, and presenting the whole race of quadrupeds, with all the license of the *Animali parlanti*; the interior of Hell, with all its machinery of terror and torture employed upon the souls of the damned; and lastly, a view of the bliss of Paradise. An old chronicler, shortly after the same period, gives the following account of a morality performed at the marriage of a Prince Palatine of the Rhine with a Princess of England. ORPHEUS enters playing upon his lyre, with an assemblage of deputies from the whole brute creation, tame and savage, dancing at his heels. The firmament next opens, and the stars appear also dancing to his music. Mercury, who officiates as stage-manager, prays Jove that one half of the stars should be transformed to knights clad in flaming armour, the other into flame-clad beauties. The good-humoured “father of gods and men” consents by a nod from the top of Olympus; the knights and dames join hands in the heavens, then descend from their empyreal abode to the banquet-hall, and dance celestial sarabands, with which the spectacle closes. The representation of the twelve labours of Hercules was a favourite morality; and it will seem rather strange to those who remember exactly what those labours were, that the son of Jupiter was not excused the representation of a single one of these memorable trials of his prowess. The mysteries, composed and acted almost exclusively in the beginning by monks and pilgrims, and consisting of the birth, life, and passion of our Saviour dramatized, were at first represented in monasteries, but subsequently exhibited publicly on religious festivals for the edification of the people. The stage was a temporary structure, with no illusion of scenery, but the orifice

of hell, in the form of a dragon's mouth, through which the devils made their entrances and exits. There is something at once shocking and ludicrous in the blasphemous absurdity of these productions. The following passage, though selected for its decorum, will give some idea of the tone in which these holy personages treated topics the most sacred. It is taken from a mystery entitled "The Conception." It is Joseph who speaks:

Mon soulcý ne se peut deffaire
De Marie, mon epouse sainte,
Que j'ai ainsi trouée enceinte,
Ne scay s'il y a faute ou non.

* * * * *

De moi n'est la chose venue,
Sa promesse n'a pas tenue.

* * * * *

Elle a rompu son mariage.
Je suis bien infeible, incredule,
Quand je regarde bien son affaire
De croire qu'il n'y ait meffaire,
Elle est enceinte; et d'ou viendrait
Le fruict? Il faut dire par droit
Qu'il y ait vice d'adultère
Puisque je n'en suis le père.

* * * * *

Elle a été trois mois entiers
Hors d'icy et au bout du tiers
Je l'ai toute grosse reçue:
L'aurait quelque paillard douce,
Ou de fait voulu efforcer.
Ha! brief, je ne scay que penser!

It may be thought that there is more of *naïveté* than profaneness in this curious monologue; but there are other passages so explicitly gross, and in so unequivocal a tone of impious pleasantry, as to leave no doubt but the two extremes of superstition and infidelity had met in the monasteries; however the sacredness of the subject, and the authority of the performers, may have imposed on the multitude. Nor is this meeting of extremes unnatural or infrequent. Why they should endeavour to bestialize the common reason of mankind is no less easily accounted for. It is the policy, if not the instinct, of all tyranny, spiritual and temporal, to bow down the slaves of its power, in very wantonness, to the lowest abasement.

This profane buffoonery at length gave such public scandal, as to call for the interference of the civil magistrate: and, soon after, some advances were made towards introducing a better taste. LAZARE BAIF, a gentleman of Anjou, who had studied

the Greek poets in Italy under the celebrated scholar MUSURUS, early in the 16th century, gave translations in French verse of the *Electra* of Sophocles and the *Hecuba* of Euripides. Several other translations from the Greek drama quickly followed. But the first who introduced any thing approaching to regular tragedy on the stage was Jodelle. His *Cleopatra*, the earliest tragedy in the language, was acted with prodigious applause at the palace of Rheims, in 1552, before Henry II. and a splendid court. The Queen of Egypt was represented by the poet himself, then only 20 years of age, and the other characters by the nobles of the court. Jodelle is regarded as the inventor of the tragic art in France. He was celebrated in his life-time as "a famous child of the Muses," and figured in "the poetic pleiad" of his contemporary and friend Ronsard.

The extent to which the dramatic genius of Jodelle was honoured by the poets of his day, and the influence which the Greek drama had already gained in France, may be collected from a curious circumstance related in the obscure memoirs of the time:—An assemblage of scholars and poets, among whom was Jodelle himself, being attracted to Arcueil by the celebration of the Carnival, in 1552, took occasion, in the spirit of the season, to celebrate the recent triumph of their companion, after the manner of the Greeks. They raised a temple to Bacchus; dithyrambics were composed and sung, in imitation of the ancient festivals of the god. A goat, decked out in due form with fillets and flowers, was produced for sacrifice at the altar. But the priests of the Muse, in their pagan enthusiasm, were humane; and the votive goat, after merely the semblance of a bloody offering, was dismissed with life and liberty. They were themselves much nearer being made the victims of their own sacrifice. The clergy raised a persecuting cry of impiety and idolatry against the performers of this harmless masquerade.

The French would consign to eternal ridicule the man who suggested the revival of the *Cleopatra* of Jodelle. But such a play, and of such a date, in the English language, would throw our dramatic virtuosos into an ecstasy. They who can discover truth, force, simplicity, freedom, in the rude language, gross manners, and capricious extravagance of an uncultivated age, and who mistake its figurative appetite of giant coarseness and capaciousness for power of imagination, would place Jodelle, were he English, among the satellites of Shakspeare. The following lines may be given as a specimen of his manner. The scene is historical. It is that in which Seleucus charges Cleopatra, in the presence of Octavius Cæsar, with secreting part of her treasure. Cleopatra, boxing and kicking him, says,

* Ah, faux meurtrier! ah, faux traistre! arrache
Sera le poil de la teste cruelle.

Que plust aux dieux que ce fust la cervelle!

(*Seleuque à Octavien.*)

Puissant Cæsar! retiens la doncq.

(*Cleopatre à Seleuque.*)

Voilà

Tous mes bienfaits—ha! le deuil qui m'efforce

Donne à mon cœur languoureux telle force,

Que je pourrais, ce me semble, froisser,

Du poing, tes os, et tes flancs crevasser

A coup de pied!

(*Octavien à Cleopatre.*)

O quelle grinsant courage!

Mais rien n'est plus furieux que la rage

D'un cœur de femme. Hé bien! quoi! Cleopatre,

Estes vous point jà saoule de le battre?

(*A Seleuque.*)

Fuy-t'-en, amy, fuy-t'-en.

Shakspeare's play on the same subject was written near half a century after that of Jodelle; and between the genius displayed in the one and in the other the distance is immense. The memorable description of Cleopatra sailing down the Cydnus, and some passages of sublimity and pathos, as the drama assumes the tone and cast of adversity, are made for the admiration of mankind. But there is a close and lamentable resemblance between the two Cleopatras. The scene just cited is in exact colouring and keeping with that in which Shakspeare's Cleopatra, striking the messenger, says—

“ Hence,
Horrible villain! or I'll spurn thine eyes,
Like balls, before me; I'll unhair thy head,

(*She hales him up and down.*)

Thou shalt be whipped with wire, and stewed in brine,
Smarting in lingering pickle, &c.”—

that other scene, in which she swears

* Ah! false villain, false traitor, I'll tear the hair off thy cruel head. Would the gods it were thy brain I dashed out.

(*Seleucus to Octavius.*)

Oh! mighty Cæsar, do hold her back.

(*Cleopatra to Seleucus.*)

See the fruits of all my bounty. Ah! the grief I suffer gives to my languid heart such force, that methinks I could beat thy bones to powder with my fists, and tread on thee till thy loins burst beneath my feet.

(*Octavius.*)

Oh! what a devilish (teeth-gnashing) spirit! but nothing is so furious as the heart of an enraged woman.—(*To Cleopatra*) Eh! how! Cleopatra, han't you yet had your stomach full of beating him?—(*To Seleucus*) Begone, begone, my friend.

“ By Isis, I will give thee bloody teeth,
If thou with Cæsar paragon again,
My man of men, &c.”—

that scene of deplorable buffoonery between Cleopatra, on the eve of suicide, and the clown, who brings her the aspic; and but too many other passages, which are read with pain and humiliation, by all who regard the glory of the English stage, and admire Shakspeare with discernment.

Jodelle, who was familiar with the Greek poets, copied their regularity and simplicity of plot; but so inartificially, that it makes his play only the more flat and tedious. It opens with the ghost of Antony complaining that the gods, envious of his glory, had made him the slave of love for his ruin; and announcing, that Cleopatra, by his command, conveyed to her in a dream, was to slay herself that day at his tomb. The queen next appears, surrounded by her female attendants, and occupied with this dream. She devotes herself to death, in obedience to the command of her lover's ghost, to avoid being chained to the triumphal car of his victorious rival. The following verses, in which she vows the sacrifice of her life, possess considerable force.

*Que plutost cette terre au fond de ses entrailles
M'engloutisse à present, que toutes les tenailles
De ces bourrelles sœurs, horreur de l'onde basse,
M'arrachent les boyaux, que la teste me casse
D'un foudre inusité, qu'ainsy je me conseille
Et que la peur de mort entre dans mon oreille.

There is, in imitation of the Greeks, a chorus of Alexandrian women, who descant upon the vanity of human affairs; the glory and the fall of Troy; the wrongs and sorrows of Medea; the beauty of the rose, which endures but for a day; and, finally, the disastrous loves of Marc Antony and Cleopatra. He wrote several other pieces, among which “The Passion of Dido,” dramatized from Virgil, is the most endurable; all, however, exhibiting glimpses of great natural talent, in the midst of rudeness, negligence, and haste. “The composition of a tragedy,” says *La Mothe*, “never cost him above ten mornings.” He died at an early age, miserable and neglected, after having been the delight of two sovereigns—one among many examples of the ingratitude of kings, and of the sensibility and weakness of the poetic character under disappointment. In the extreme of poverty and sickness, he reminds (in vain) Charles

* Sooner may this earth engulf me in its bowels, sooner may the torturing pincers of the avenging sisters, that spread horror over the infernal lake, tear my vitals, than I counsel me to this, or let the fear of death find passage through my ear.

IX. of inhuman memory, that “he who makes use of the lamp should at least supply it with oil”—“*Qui se sert de la lampe, au moins de l’huile y met.*” But what seems to have broken his heart was the failure of a grand *spectacle*, founded on the Argonautic expedition, which he undertook to have represented under his own immediate direction at court. He had employed, in the preparation of it, all the resources of his skill, which was remarkable, in architecture and scenic painting. But on the eventful day, the performers, musicians, scene-shifters—all conspired, by their blunders, to ruin his hopes. “Where,” says he, “I had ordered *two rocks*, I beheld advancing *two bells*” (au lieu de *deux rochers* que j’avais commandés, je vis arriver *deux clochers*). The following beautiful stanza is from a Funeral Ode on his wretched end, written by one of his friends :

*Jodelle est mort de pauvreté.
 La pauvreté a eu puissance
 Sur la richesse de la France.—
 O Dieu ! quel trait de cruauté !
 Le Ciel avoit mis en Jodelle,
 Un esprit tout autre qu’humain :
 La France lui nia le pain,
 Tant elle fust mère cruelle !

* Jodelle hath had his death-stroke from poverty. Poverty hath had power over the treasure of France. O God! how cruel. Heaven gave Jodelle a spirit other than human—France denied him a morsel of bread, so much was she a cruel mother.

[This closely literal version can give to the mere English reader no idea of the simplicity, tenderness, and turn of phrase, in the original.]

The Drama.

LONDON THEATRICALS.

Drury Lane.—Mr. Macready's *Hamlet*.

We turn with pleasure to that which, of all the performances of the month, most provokes and deserves criticism—the *Hamlet* of Mr. Macready—a performance so full of questionable points and unquestionable beauties, that we heartily wish we had nothing else to notice. As a piece of mere tragic acting—as the representation of the Prince, affected by the death of a beloved father, the heartlessness of a mother, and the loss of a crown, who is haunted by the ghost of that father, disclosing that the usurper is his murderer, and goading the son to revenge, it leaves nothing to be wished for. The first scene with the Ghost; the passionate soliloquy with which the second act closes; the play scene, and the closet scene, are individually as passionate, as picturesque, and as true as any thing we have seen on the stage for many a year, and are certainly deepened in colouring since he played them before he quitted England. But he seems to us less happy in the level passages—in the poetry and philosophy of the part—which yet by his acquirements and tastes he should be peculiarly fitted to give. We miss the princely gentleness, the beautiful relapse from individual grief into general and abstract musing, the gleaming sense of pleasure and social regard with which the rigour of the destinies is occasionally beguiled, as on the first meeting with Horatio, and in the prospect of renewing the old theatrical enjoyments; and the tones which should give fit expression to those stray gifts of wisdom which are strewn plentifully through the lighter scenes. That this forbearance to allow due prominence to the plaintive beauty of the part proceeds from no indifference to that beauty, we are assured; we attribute it partly to long familiarity, and partly to a despair of entirely embodying the intellectual part of the poet's creation;—but the effect is extremely prejudicial to our gratification, and peculiarly unfortunate for the artist's fame—because no one can feel poetry more truly, or speak it more delightfully. In general, then, we think, with the splendid exceptions to which we have referred, and the exception also of the scene with Ophelia, which is played best when made least of, that he acted the part with too great rapidity and too frequent abruptness. If *Hamlet* would be greatly improved to our feelings by the addition of at least half an hour to the time which it now occupies. We offer these suggestions with diffidence, because Mr. Macready acts from thought as well as impulse; but it seems to us that, in sacrificing so much to passion, he is at present doing the finest half of his capabilities injustice.

THEATRICALS IN PARIS.

There was an extraordinary representation at the Opera-Comique on Thursday, the 6th instant, for the benefit of Huet, a veteran *artiste* of this theatre. His bill of fare announced entertainments most delightfully varied, and of the highest order; and this proof of anxiety to deserve the favour of the public, combined with his length of service, fully entitled him to the very liberal patronage he received. Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Berri, and the Duke of Orleans and his family, were present; and, in fact, the audience was altogether one of the most fashionable and brilliant I have ever been fortunate enough to see, comprising, as it did, all that is distinguished in the financial, literary, and court circles. The splendour of the braids and bracelets, dresses and diamonds (to say nothing of bright eyes), was positively dazzling. The ladies, contrary to custom, went in full dress, and so enchanting was the effect, that I could not avoid breathing forth a wish that it were thus always; for I think of the captivating coquettish little Françaises as cockney aldermen do of *Vénuses*—that they ought never to appear except *en grand tenue*.

At seven o'clock the amusements of the evening commenced with the comic-opera, *Picaros et Diego*, in which Ponchard, that sweetest of warblers, inspired all those having the least pretensions to ears and souls with a feeling of the most lively pleasure. The two concluding acts of *Romeo and Juliet* were performed next. To adopt the French idiom, Miss Smithson bore away all the suffrages. *Valerie* followed. It was played with delightful *ensemble*, by Mademoiselles Mrs. Dupuis, Armand, Firmin, and Monrose. Both the last mentioned pieces were received with great applause, and it was generally remarked, that “the pearl of France,” had never before acted *Valerie*, or the English-woman *Juliet*, half so well. Next in order came a *builetto de circonstance*, called *La Reunion des Artistes*. The name sufficiently announces that the only end proposed in this little affair was to allow a number of *artistes* to exhibit their kindly feeling towards the *beneficiare*, and make their bow to the audience. It was, however, rife with interest alike to the idle thoughtless gazer and to the philosopher. The display of splendid fancy dresses afforded matter of wonderment to the one, while the assemblage of so many individuals, distinguished by their talent, could not fail to furnish an agreeable subject of contemplation to the other.

Among the crowd of *artistes* now in their noon of fame, were to be seen Chenard, Le Sage, and several others, prime favourites in their day, who wisely following the advice, “*Solus scenscentem equum*,” had retired before age had robbed them of a single laurel. They were warmly and loudly greeted as they came forward by the audience; but the cheering assumed a higher and more enthusiastic tone, when the principal *artistes* of the theatres Français and Anglais advanced together, Armand leading Miss Smithson; Abbot, Mademoiselle Mrs.

NEW YORK THEATRICALS.

The Park.—Mrs. Sloman's Benefit on Monday was well and fashionably attended, and her performance in the *German Dances* was

was a cuaste and intellectual effort, combining much force, energy, and discretion, which left upon the minds of the audience a strong and favourable opinion of her powers. On Wednesday she repeated *Isabella*. This part is the best in which we have seen her; the preservation of the character throughout is complete, and there are very many passages which she executes with uncommon skill and effect.

Mrs. Hilson re-appeared on Tuesday, after a long indisposition, in the part of *Julia*, in the *Gambler's Fate*; she was greeted with a welcome that clearly indicated how firmly she is established in the public favor. We shall have occasion to speak of her acting hereafter.

The Courier of Naples, a new dramatic piece, was produced at this Theatre on Thursday—we shall probably analyze it next week.

Mr. Horn, we understand, is busily engaged in composing an Opera, which will probably be produced at the Park early in April. Towards the close of the present month, it is understood that Mr. Poorman and Mrs. Austin will be again in town, when, in company with Mr. Horn, *Artaxerxes* and several other operas will be again presented to the New York public. These performances, we are given to understand, will be got up with great care, and the salutary practice of rehearsing will be carried to its fullest extent. Mr. Horn has for the present abandoned his journey to the south, the preparations for the pieces about to be brought forward necessarily requiring his constant presence in town.

The Bower—Very good, and substantial attractions continue at this house. Miss Rock, Mr. Forrest, and Mr. Holland, are strong cards, and are played with much skill by the Managers. Mr. Forrest, although repeating his usual characters, still draws good houses, repetition, indeed, does not, with him, produce its usual cloying effects upon the audiences, for he has a multitude of friends and admirers, who nightly go to see him acting, and who could only be drawn thither but by the conviction of his excellence as a Tragedian. As his personation of those different parts have heretofore been spoken of in the *Albion*, it is not necessary to advert to it again, further than to say, that he sustains, well, his former reputation, and that his acting abates nothing of its early freshness and vigor.

Mrs. Giffert appears occasionally, and always receives that approbation which her merits as an actress so eminently entitle her to.

The Chatham Theatre, we regret to say, is again closed; preparations, however, it is said, are making to re-open it under advantageous circumstances.

The French Dancers meet the most decided success in Boston; and such is the fascination produced by their beautiful art, that Mons. Achille has been obliged to make an appeal to the generosity of the public against the constant practice of *encoring*. This is rather a singular circumstance, and says very little for the code of morality attempted to be established by a certain class of people in this city some time ago.—The following is the Appeal alluded to, which we copy from the Theatrical Advertisement in the Boston Statesman:—

“The Dances composed by Mons. Achille are accompanied by so much fatigue, that a repetition of them on the same evening is attended with great danger of injury; as such a result would not contribute to the pleasure of the public, and be seriously detrimental to the Dancers. It is their earnest request that the Public will not insist upon performance of that, which might eventuate in a loss of the power to pursue their profession.”

ON THE GREEN-ROOM OF THE FRENCH THEATRE.

THE world progresses somewhat like a snail : it makes an immense journey of some inches during the day, and falls back at night to its original position, that it may set out with the same vigour on the same path the next morning. Both animals leave behind them vestiges of their travel—the one its slimy, the other its inky annals ; and it is hard to say which, in its proper proportion, is the more lasting, or the more perishable. Look at the history of revolutions, their commencement, and termination at the very point whence they set out.—Does not this universe resemble a slate, on which some Tyro of a spiritual order, mightier than ours, has been learning his arithmetic, drawing thereon huge sums in multiplication and division, and anon blotting all out in an instant with his fore-finger and spittle ? But a truce with simile :—What have all these upsets and overthrows of nations left us ? They have left to us essayists the neatest heads of chapters ;—to chronologists the most convenient epochs imaginable. There is no knowing what history would do without them : they are its goals and starting-posts, and resemble the ancient temple on Cape Colonna—once the mighty object of worship and witness of great events, now but a beacon to guide the solitary mariner.

Every one that wishes to take a survey of France, political or literary, places himself in the year 1789, and casts his view over the preceding or the subsequent age, as circumstances induce him. We shall do both, merely throwing a glance back, but thenceforward giving

more in detail the history of the French stage. The year 1789 is complete as a stage epoch in France, since it not only marks the commencement of the revolution, but is the very year of the rise of Talma, who has ever since held his station of pre-eminence. Extreme convenience in the arrangement of epochs and eras is, indeed, remarkable all through the literary history of France, and is principally owing to the three great reigns, during which the literature of the country was brought nearest to its perfection; as also to the long lives and regular succession of its men of genius. In tragedy the names of Corneille, Racine, Voltaire, occupy, with little interruption, the whole extent of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Moliere marks the rise of comedy; but as France never found a successor worthy of their great comic writer, this portion of their literary history is more confused. Moliere died in 1673, and it was not till twenty-three years subsequent that the *Joueur* of Regnard appeared, which play was considered to revive the glory of comedy. Since Regnard, French comedy has not risen (we speak according to the estimation of their own critics) above the rank of mediocrity, with, however, a few exceptions; such as Gresset's *Mechant*, which Gray has recorded to be the best comedy he ever read, Piron's *Metromanie*, and, perhaps, the lively productions of Beaumarchais.

The most eminent of their tragic actors before 1789 was Le Kain, a singular coincidence of name with our present theatric genius; but we shall find stronger marks of coincidence than that of name. "Le Kain," says Mademoiselle Clairon, "a simple artisan, of mean and unprepossessing appearance, below the middle height, hoarse in voice, and weak in temperament, leaped from the workshop to the stage, without any other guide than genius;—without any assistance beyond his own powers, became the greatest of tragedians, and, in spite of all his defects, appeared the finest, the most imposing, the most interesting of men."

Henri-Louis Le Kain was born in Paris in 1729, and made his first appearance on the Théâtre Français in September 1750. He had previously matured his powers on the boards of the *Théâtre Rue Traversière*, where he received and profited by the lessons of Voltaire. His first success raised against him, as usual in such cases, a crowd of enemies, who decried and opposed him. "How," said Louis the Fifteenth to one of those, "how can you speak thus of Le Kain? He has made me weep—me, who scarcely ever shed a tear." With great defects of voice and figure, and with nothing external to support his genius, except his eye and action, Le Kain met with the most rapturous success. He could not play Corneille, "Racine was too simple for him," but in the plays of Voltaire he shone forth and electrified the audience. That poet never enjoyed the pleasure of seeing Le Kain on the Théâtre Français: he had set out on his visit to Russia just before the actor's *débüt*, and on his return to Paris from Ferney, Le Kain was no more:—He died in 1778.

It is impossible not to mention Baron, the rival and predecessor of Le Kain, whom every reader will instantly compare with Kemble. The French critics, however, do not consider their rival actors to have been so much on a par as we do Kemble and Kean. Baron had the advantage of being educated for the stage by Molière. He possessed great

dignity and beauty of person, and, though at first declamatory, "yet as he mingled with the most illustrious ranks of society, true and simple grandeur became familiar to him."* "As soon as he appeared," says Marmontel, "one forgot alike both actor and poet: the majestic beauty of his features and action spread an illusion over the scene. When he spoke, it was Mithridates or Cæsar: every tone and gesture was that of nature," &c. "In fine, he first displayed the perfection of his art—a simplicity and nobleness united—a manner tranquil without being cold, and spirited without being immoderate; marking the nicest shades of sentiment, at the same time concealing the art which produced them." Baron died of a mortification, in consequence of a wound which he received in the foot while performing.

Mademoiselle Clairon, in her *Memoirs*, asserts, that it is more difficult to procure good actors than good actresses. So competent a judge in the case could not have been mistaken as to the fact, so far as it related to the stage of her own country. She does not, however, make the principle very general; nor does she attribute it to the peculiar nature and genius of the sexes, so much as to the different manner in which they are brought up. "Male actors," says she, "require to bring to their art a degree of education which the generality of men do not possess. Women have more advantages, for, commonly speaking, education is much the same for all ranks of their sex, that are not decidedly of the lower order." There does not seem to be much force in the reasoning, as it is likely that the education of men in general was not much inferior to that average information, which, she tells us, was possessed by all ranks of her sex. Indeed we should be inclined to adopt the opinion contrary to that of Mademoiselle Clairon. In persons of different sexes, possessing the common run of talent, we should suppose a superior portion of tact and sensibility on the female side; and a view of our stage will not contradict the opinion, considering how much more numerous the *breeches-parts* (to speak the dialect of the green-room,) are than the others. In genteel comedy, the ladies ought to have the palm; in low comedy, the gentlemen: for, not to mention the inaptness of a female face for grimacing, there are certainly more *originals* among the lords of the creation. In the second-rate parts of tragedy, and all beneath, female talent has decidedly the advantage; and as to the genius capable of filling our first-rate characters, it is a quality so rare, and our experience in the case is, unfortunately, so confined, that no general conclusion can be drawn, save that of being thankful wherever we meet it.

The tragic actresses contemporary with Le Kain, were Dumesnil and Clairon. They have both published *Memoirs*, in which each severely criticises, yet, at the same time, does justice to the merits of her rival.† Mademoiselle Dumesnil had the possession of the stage first, and for a long time left Clairon but the inferior parts, which the latter never forgave. They were of pretty equal merit, but Clairon, not possessing the same advantages of face and person with her rival, claims higher praise for her success. Dumesnil retired from the stage in 1776, and

* *Mémoire de Mademoiselle Clairon.*

† Any person that is fond of ghost-stories will find a very curious, and a very well attested one, at the commencement of the *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Clairon.*

Clairon soon after followed her example, owing to one of those quarrels which her furious temper was continually exciting behind the scenes. They both died in the same year, 1803.

The principal comic performers of the same period were Preville, Molé, and Mademoiselle Dangeville. Preville, like Le Kain, owed his rise to royal discernment and patronage. It is some honour to Louis the Fifteenth, that if he despised Voltaire, he had critical foresight enough to descry the talents of the two great actors of his reign, and constancy enough to support them against cabal. After his Majesty had seen Preville perform at Fontainebleau, he turned to the Duc de Richelieu—"I have received many comedians on your account, Messieurs, gentlemen of the chamber: this one shall be on my own." Preville was born in Paris, 1721, and received his early education in the Abbey St. Antoine, the reverend inhabitants of which monastery were greatly shocked afterwards to learn, that their seminary could have reared so graceless a being as a first-rate comedian. Like Ben Jonson, he handled a trowel in his youth, but soon made his way to the profession most suited to him. It was at Rouen he perfected himself in his art, and the Norman critics have not ceased to be proud of having reared him: but they by no means confine their pride to this, for, like the smaller fry of critics in Edinburgh and Dublin, they look with consummate disdain on metropolitan taste. If you believe themselves, they are the only judges of the drama, both as to acting and writing, in the same way that the best French is said to be spoken at Lausanne, and the best English in America. Preville appeared at the Théâtre Français in 1753, and retired in 1786. He however reappeared at intervals, with a very pardonable breach of resolution, and died in 1799. Although the actors of that day all seem to have possessed great versatility of talent, and which, indeed, could not have been very difficult and wonderful, considering the sameness, the universal rhyme and recitation of French plays, Preville excelled in low comedy, Molé in genteel. In reading the accounts of these two actors, one is surprised to learn, amidst traits of their comic power, that *Stukelli* and *Beverley* were two famous parts of theirs, which fact quite overturns a tacit comparison we had been making between Preville and Munden. The account given of Preville in the scene of Larissolle in the *Mercur Galant*, where he enters as a drunken soldier, so strongly reminds one of Nipperkin, that the comparison is unavoidable.

Molé was born in 1734, appeared on the Théâtre Français 1760, and died in 1802. This is rather a summary recapitulation of the life of a great actor, but we dread to weary our readers with details of success in parts, the names of which even they, perhaps, neither know nor care about. It is sought chiefly in this retrospect, to mark the principal comedians, as well as the period of their respective reigns. Mademoiselle Dangeville, like Clairon, left the Opera for the Comedy: she retired from the stage as early as 1763; between which period and the appearance of Mademoiselle Mars, the present comic heroine of the theatre, there occurs no female performer of first-rate reputation, though Mademoiselles Contat and Joly were much admired in their day.

The year 1789 effected a revolution in the theatre and its members, as well as in all other ranks and bodies of men. Previously considered as merely a part of the royal household, the theatre was governed

despotically and capriciously by the gentlemen of the bedchamber, its revenues squandered upon their mistresses, and the avenues to fame which it afforded, confined to their sycophants and favourites. The revolution threw the management of the houses (except the Opera) into the hands of committees, raised the comedians to all the privileges of genteel society, and some of its members to stations even of political importance. With respect to the latter species of advancement, however, the body of comedians have not derived much honour from the statesmanship of Collot d'Herbois, the minion of Robespierre.* Much credit is due to Talma, for refraining to meddle with the sanguinary declaimers of that day: he made use of the revolution to advance himself in his profession—no farther; and he certainly had every temptation and opportunity to become politically conspicuous. By a minor but more honourable distinction, Molé, Preville, and Monvel, became members of the Institute. Notwithstanding these advantages, the monopoly of parts is still as close as ever, and the management being in the hands of the principal actors, whose interest is much more bent to support stage-supremacy than all the favouritism of the gentlemen of the chamber, rising talent must remain depressed as ever. Another existing hardship is, that all the theatres are obliged to contribute one-tenth of their yearly revenue towards the support of the *Grand Opéra*: thus the genius of Ducis and of Talma is compelled to retrench from its little reward to pay the extravagant annuities of opera-dancers. In return for this, however, both actors and authors can look forward to a recompense that in our country they cannot. An interest in the property of a piece is not confined to the life of the author, but descends like an estate to his children; and actors are enabled to look forward to a comfortable and independent old age, by the certainty of enjoying an annuity on retiring, proportioned to their respective merits. The present king, with great generosity, has already settled a very handsome one on Talma.

This great actor made his *debût* at the Théâtre Français in November, 1787, in the part of *Séide* in "*Mahomet*;" but it was not till two years subsequent that he laid the foundation of his present pre-eminence in the tragedy of Charles the Ninth, by Jos. M. Chénier. It was represented for the first time on November 4th, 1789; St. Phal, the first actor,† considered the King of Navarre to be the leading character in the piece, and left Talma the possession of the other. The tragedy met with unbounded success, owing more to its political allusions than its merits; the ruling party of the theatre, however, envied Talma the lucky hit he had made, and brought forward Larive for

* It was Collot d'Herbois, the comedian, that directed the massacres at Lyons, during the reign of terror. That unfortunate town had hissed him off the stage for his miserable acting ten years before, and he avenged the disgrace by cutting off the heads of its inhabitants.

† St. Phal has retired from the stage about a month since. On which occasion the tragedy of *Sylla* was represented for the first time: it is written by M. Jouy, well known in England as the *Hermite de la Chaussée D'Antin*. It is but just to mention, that he formerly wrote a most ferocious tragedy against the English, the scene of which was in India. How the French revolutionists could have had the impudence to accuse the English of bloodshed is hard to conceive. *Mutato nomine de se fabula narretur*.

the purpose of rivalling and eclipsing him. Charles the Ninth no longer appeared in the *affiches* or play-bills, and Talma seems to have remained laudably quiet under the oppression for a full twelvemonth.

It was during this interval that La Harpe, in August 1790, appeared at the bar of the National Assembly, and read in the name of the dramatic authors, that petition which afterwards procured the decree concerning the liberty of the theatres, &c. The principal articles in the petition were: The abolition of what was called *privileges des spectacles*; that every theatre should possess exclusively the right to represent the ancient dramatic authors; that every author should have the right to fix the value of his own work, and that no piece should be represented without the permission of the author. It is to be understood that the French poets do not give up their property to managers for the receipts of a certain number of nights, as they do in England, but that they receive a certain portion of the receipts every time their piece is represented.

At length the patience of Talma began to be worn out, and he was resolved no longer to be kept in the back-ground. Charles the Ninth was again performed, but whether through the intrigues of the actor, or those merely of the popular party, is hard to determine. A deputy of the town of Marseilles demanded in the name of his colleagues, a representation of Charles the Ninth; among those who stood up to second the demand was Mirabeau. Naudet, one of the actors, made excuses founded on the illness of some of his comrades. Talma denied that there was any truth in the plea. In fine the piece was ordered to be performed: the applause during the representation was, however, much interrupted with disorder and opposition—the promoters of disturbance were arrested, and sent to the Hotel de Ville; among them one is surprised to find the famous Danton. The discomfited party did not fail to accuse Talma of intriguing to bring forward the piece and excite confusion. Talma addressed Mirabeau to exculpate him from the charge, and Mirabeau answered him satisfactorily. The actor was not content with this, but publicly addressed a letter to Naudet, in which he inveighs bitterly against the *noirs* of the Comédie Française. The anti-popular party in the National Assembly had been branded with the epithet of *noir*, answering to our *malignant* in the days of Cromwell. In consequence of this letter, the company of comedians banished Talma from their society, and refused to act with him. Chénier, the author of the piece, cannot be supposed to have been left tranquil during this dispute. In one of his letters, he says, “I have been compelled to carry pistols for my personal defence, from the moment that my tragedy of Charles the Ninth raised me up an enemy in every dastard slave.”

There was of course a tumult in the theatre, as soon as the resolution of the comedians against Talma became publicly known. The parterre was quieted the first evening by an assurance on the part of the performers, that they would answer the inquiries and complaints relative to M. Talma on the ensuing evening. It was the 12th of September,—Henri made his appearance as soon as the curtain rose, and addressed the audience:—“Gentlemen, our society, persuaded that M. Talma has betrayed its interests, and compromised the public tranquillity by his conduct, have come to the unanimous resolution

of having no connexion whatsoever with him, till authority shall have decided the subject of debate." Whilst a mingled tumult of disapprobation and applause followed this address, Dugazon, another of the performers, rushed on the stage, and addressed the audience abruptly:—"Gentlemen, the society of comedians are about to take the same steps against me that they have already taken against M. Talma. It is false that M. Talma has betrayed the society; all his crime consists in having told the public, that he could play Charles the Ninth." Upon this a fresh tumult arose, the rancour of which, though not the noise, was allayed by Soulleau's rising and imitating the snuffing voice of the then president of the National Assembly, crying *à l'ordre*, and ringing an immense bell.* Divided in respect between the old authorities of the monarchy and the new ones of the revolution, some of the comedians had recourse to the gentlemen of the chamber, and others to the mayor of Paris. The mayor with difficulty allayed the tumult, and an *arrêt du conseil* was next day issued and placarded, enjoining Messieurs of the Comédie Française to continue their performances in company with M. Talma. They flatly refused to yield, and the magistrates shut up the theatre altogether, until they at length thought proper to submit. Talma appeared again in Charles the Ninth on the 28th of September. Peace, notwithstanding, was not restored in the green-room; scandalous pamphlets were continually making their appearance. Naudet publicly accused Talma of cowardice, and asserted that he had concealed himself with his fusil in a granary on the day of a popular tumult. The latter allowed having been in the granary on the day mentioned, but said that he had merely ascended, that he might there have a better view of the tumult. We here take leave of the French green-room and Talma for a while, merely mentioning, that as that actor laid the foundation of his fame in Charles the Ninth, he "put the seal to it" (as the French critics observe) in the Othello of Ducis.

* The following letter, addressed by Chénier to one of the journals at this period, in which England is popularly quoted as a precedent, forms a curious contrast with the national sentiment at present:—"I was not myself," says he, "present at the scenes which took place a few days since at the theatre, but I have since conversed with many Englishmen who had the misfortune to be witnesses of them, and who were not a little scandalized on the occasion. If the public call for an actor whom they have not seen a long time, the other comedians who are hostile to this actor, engage their creatures to cry NO:—so far there is nothing extraordinary. The comedians dare to accuse this actor before the public with a seriousness that but augments the ridicule of the whole affair:—nor is this very astonishing. A comedian, bound by ties of friendship with the one proscribed, comes forward to defend him with a zeal, at least laudable—this too is natural. But here is the absurdity:—the comedians are permitted to answer the public, and the public, who pays, is not permitted to answer the comedians. This is what strangers cannot conceive: they affirm, that at London, it is not the public which owes respect and obedience to the performers, but the performers to the public. They also observe, that soldiers and fusils are a strange way of maintaining order in the interior of a theatre; and they speak with derision of the liberty of a people, who allow themselves to be surrounded with armed men in the enjoyment of pleasures which they purchase. They assure me, that even in Spain, which is by no means a free country, they do not degrade brave soldiers to the unworthy employment of constraining the public liberty merely to serve the hatred or caprice of the comedians. And they farther profess themselves assured, and I myself join with them in the conviction, that such a display of authority cannot meet the approbation of citizens such as Messieurs Bailly and Lafayette, &c."